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## INDIA IN AMERICA.

BY CARYL COLEMAN.

IN studying the architecture of Venice there are two facts brought forcibly before the student's mind: one is the contention between the Gothic and Byzantine school of art, and the other is the failure of either to obtain the mastery, but in the struggle giving birth to a new school, which we now denominate Venetian. Almost at the same time with this art battle in Italy there was a similar strife going on in western India between Mahomedan and Hindu architectural ideas, the outcome of which we see in the beautiful Indo-Saracenic buildings of Ahmedabad.

This city, like Venice, was one of merchants of enormous wealth and great luxury. Founded A.D. 1428, by Ahmad Shah, it soon extended from street to street, until it covered thirty miles with spacious thoroughfares, magnificent mosques, palaces, temples, fountains, while on every side Oriental splendor was to be seen, not only in the edifices but in the dresses and arms of its inhabitants. At the court of its Prince, artists, poets, philosophers, and men of letters were received with open arms and loaded with every favor. Its commerce extended to the whole eastern world, and its merchants amassed fortunes of almost fabulous amounts. Its looms and workshops turned out superb cloth of gold and silver, silk and satin, carvings in wood and ivory of wonderful beauty, inlays of enamel and pearl, boxes of sandal-wood and ivory, chiselled work in gold and steel, embroidery on silk and leather, arms damascened in gold and set with precious stones, every art, every handicraft contributed to adorn, glorify and enrich this wondrous city. But above all other arts, architecture there found a field where the most beautiful conceptions of the Mahomedan and Hindu mind found expression in a mixed, yet harmonious form of building and decoration.

The treatment of the interiors of the palaces were resplendent and luxurious beyond anything the western imagination ever formulated. The rooms were very large, the ceiling generally flat, supported upon columns of the most beautiful marble richly inlaid with divers colored stones, and costly gems, the ceiling itself covered with gold and silver incrustations of delicate foliage, the cornice and frieze sculptured with great skill in conventionalized plant forms, the walls inlaid with exquisite tracery and arabesque inscriptions in letters of gold from the poets, while the floor was a magnificent mosaic of the finest marbles.

The mosques and temples beggar description, for they were truly the creations of Aladdin's Lamp.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Ahmedabad reached its greatest grandeur, and became one of the most splendid cities of the world, but long, long ago, its glory left it; poverty, decay and desolation walk through its streets, and it has shrunk from thirty miles in circumference to five; from a busy population of 900,000 souls to 90,000, on whom the hand of indolence has a firm grasp. Yet, amid all its ruin and degradation, it has retained and kept half alive until to-day, some of the arts it once gloried in: the making of gold and silk fabrics and the carving of stone and wood.

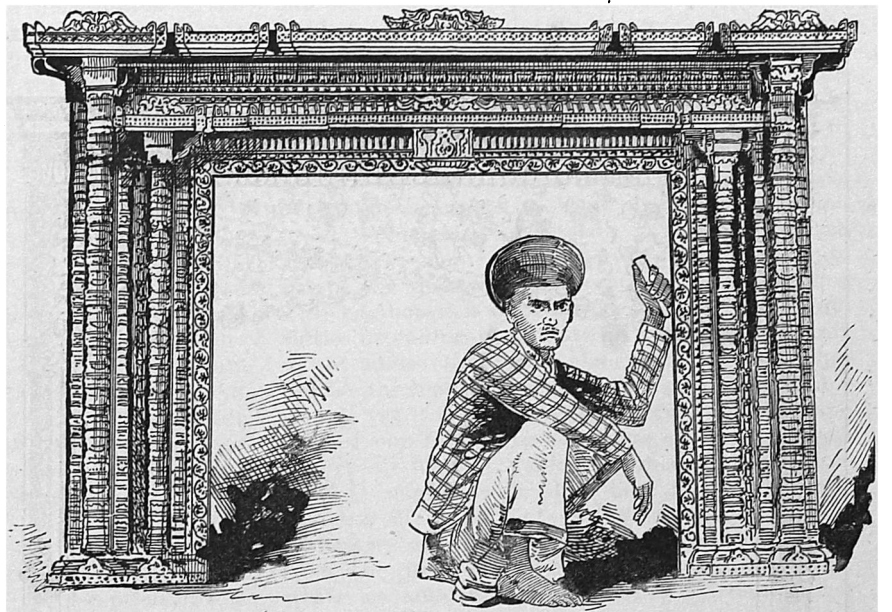
The occupation of India by the English, the breaking up of the many kingdoms into which it was divided, and the importation of European goods into the country, has resulted in destroying many arts and handicrafts that previously flourished throughout the land.

The art of wood carving, except in Bombay black-wood

boxes and furniture, had almost passed away, when in 1881 a young American artist from New York, Mr. Lockwood de Forest, went to India to study the decorative art of its people; from the first he was so impressed with the great beauty of the wood carvings that he at once commenced a serious study of the subject. Going to Ahmedabad, the home of the art, he not only examined and studied the carved wooden façades, balconies, and door-ways of its ruined palaces, but sketched and photographed everything that could be of use in understanding the art, or in the future application of it to the decoration of houses in his own country. Not satisfied with that, he hunted up two or three good carpenters and established in Ahmedabad a shop of wood work. In this same shop to-day he not only has carvers of wood, but of stone and chisellers in brass, altogether ninety men under the intelligent management of Muggunbhai Huttushing.

The more Mr. de Forest saw the more interested he became, the more desirous he was to rescue the old Indian arts from death and oblivion. The first thing to be done was to interest the art world of Europe and America in the subject. Not being able to bring art students to Ahmedabad, he was compelled to bring Ahmedabad to them, that is, parts of it; so with American energy he made a move to buy three houses and bring them bodily to England and New York, but there were many obstacles to be overcome, for the people did not wish to sell; the houses were large and old, and it was only through the fact of a new street being made and the tearing down of a number of buildings in consequence and the influence of the English resident in his favor, together with a large expenditure of money, that his exertions and wishes were crowned with success. The three houses were bought, two sent to England, one was put up at once in the South Kensington Museum, the other passed into the hands of a student of Eastern art, while the third was brought to New York.

The next step was to make a market for the products of the Ahmedabad shop, to find practical uses to which the carvings could be put, so Mr. de Forest opened an exhibition in this city in the year 1882, of his objects in carved wood and stone,



INDIAN MANTEL, SHOWING WORKMAN CARVING.

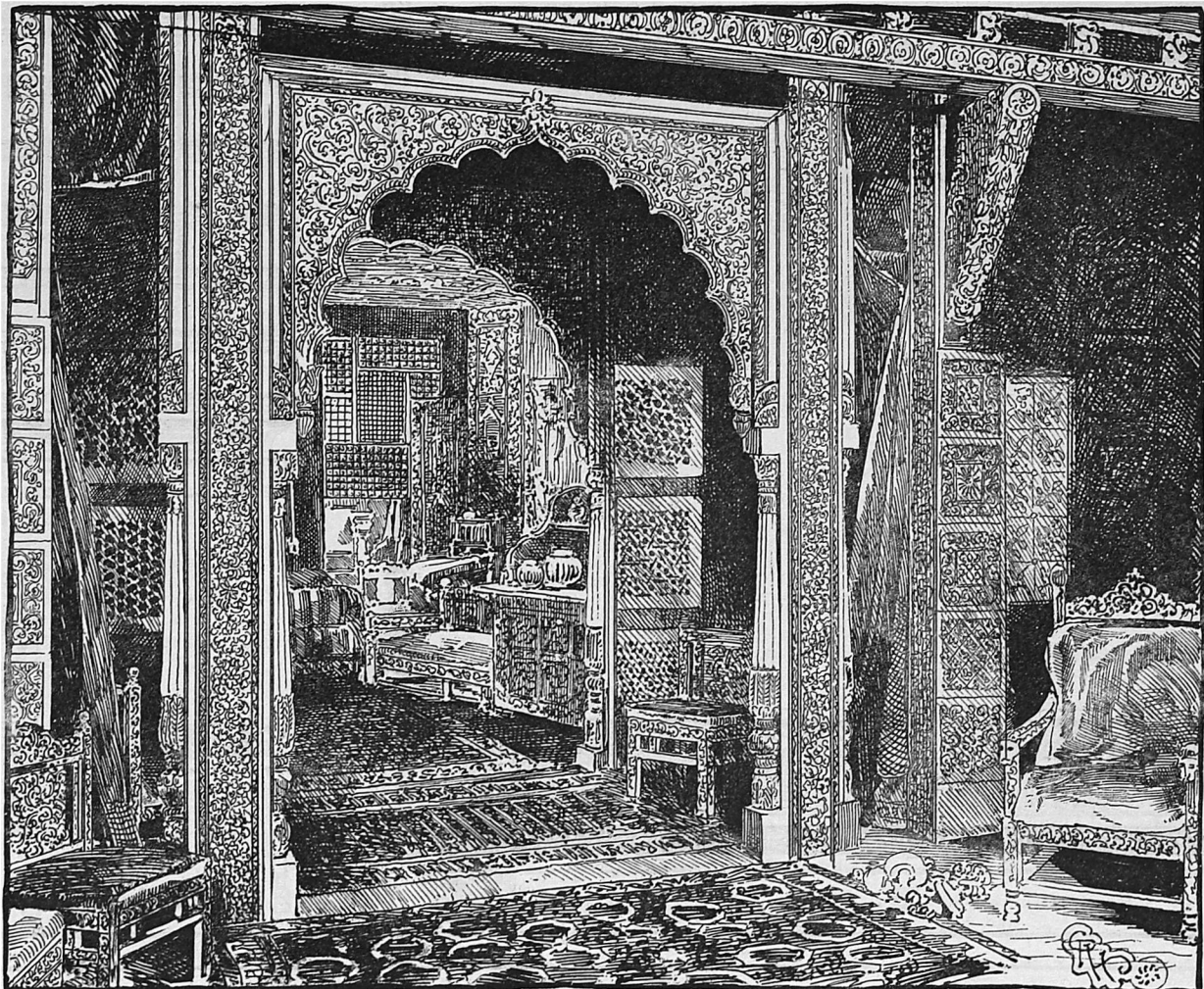
metal work and silk fabrics, which at once attracted the attention and the warmest admiration of our leading artists and architects, and led to orders being placed with him, and culminated in his opening a permanent room and studio at No. 9 East Seventeenth Street.

In passing from the street through the building to the door of Mr. de Forest's rooms, everything is Occidental and common-place, but the moment you enter his door you have stepped into another world, you have gone East, far, far into the Orient. For a moment you are bewildered by the multitude of things that meet your eyes: rugs, silk tissues shot with gold, kimcobs of gorgeous hue and texture, chain armor, spears and swords of the finest magnetic iron, with blades engraved, watered, and damascened in gold, hammered and cut brass, copper vessels overlaid with silver, carvings of great skill and artistic excellence in wood and stone, highly glazed tiles, here and there an antique vase.

The rooms are a world of strange, unfamiliar, and beautiful forms; design follows design without end, motive after motive, artistic and suggestive. It is humiliating when a comparison is made between the feeble effort of our designers and carvers in the same direction, and these works fresh from the hands of the Ahmedabad workmen, however it is consoling when we look at the general design of their buildings, as shown in a book on Indian Domestic Architecture, a book Mr. de Forest is about bringing out, there we see they were somewhat crude and barbaric in the general construction, in spite of their great refinement in matters of detail. The consolation is here, that we can unite their refinement of detail with ours of construction and produce new forms, or more truly speaking, combination of beauty.

Mr. de Forest has between his front and middle room two wooden arches that are typical of Ahmedabad architecture, for in these arches we see a harmonious union of Hindu and Mohammedan forms, commencing with a Hindu pedestal, a tapering column, a capital the same as the base, except it stands in a reverse position, while the spandrel is Mohammedan, the whole is most artistically carved, plastic in feeling and effective in design.

Many years ago a Mr. Atkinson translated from the Persian a satire on women, in which there is a swinging seat described and all the delights that may be enjoyed therein; just such a



VIEW INTO CENTER AND REAR ROOM OF MR. DE FOREST'S APARTMENTS, SHOWING INDIAN DECORATION.



seat is hanging from the ceiling of one of these rooms by four grotesque brass chains picked out with red lac.

The wood mantels are highly decorative in spite of an excessive elaboration in the carving. The chairs have beautiful, perforated tracery backs. The bedsteads are carved wood, covered with hammered brass in lovely floral designs. Besides all kinds of furniture there are in these rooms cut brass, carved stone and wood of all sizes and shapes ready to be applied to the ornamentation of rooms or the building of houses, or for cabinet work.

The Ahmedabad shop is kept full of work and from day to day its sculptors, joiners, braziers and blacksmiths are filling orders for this country: ceilings, door-trims, mantels, and furniture of all sorts.

Thanks to Mr. de Forest and his love of the beautiful, we are becoming acquainted with the art of a far distant land and people, increasing our knowledge of ornament and broadening our field of decoration. We can also learn a moral lesson from these Indians, for if there is one thing more than another shown by their works it is that they are, like all good workmen, conscientious in all they do, a lesson hard to learn in this age of hurry and superficiality.

One day a draftsman, the next an architect, study and thought are unnecessary, consequently knowledge of the great truths of proportion, harmony and color, the very foundation stones of an architectural education.

By visiting Mr. de Forest's rooms, the student, the architect and decorator will find much to admire, much that is suggestive and instructive.

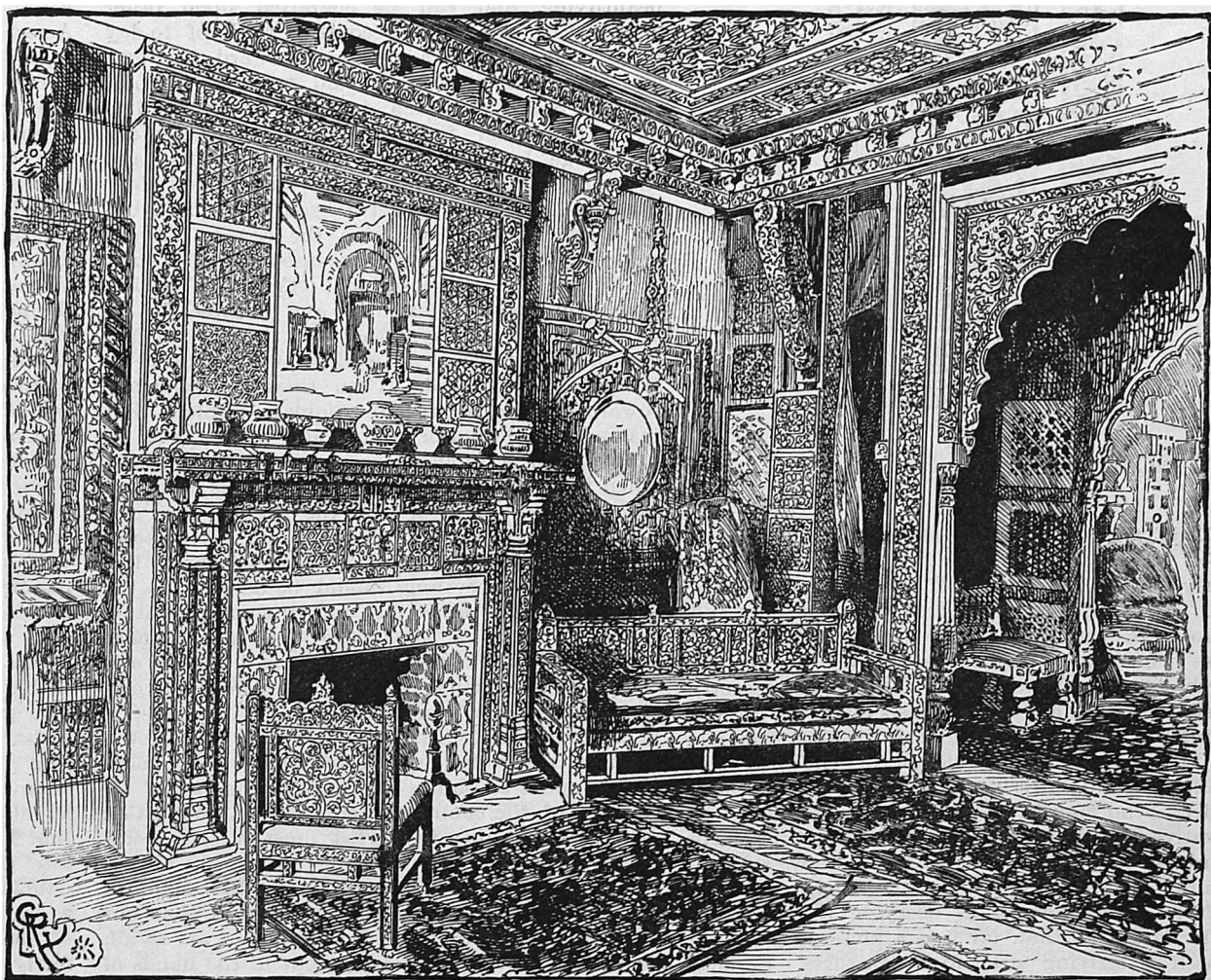
#### STUDIO DECORATION.

**S**PEAKING of studios, they are, as almost everybody knows, the most picturesque of all apartments. The true artist has a dash of the Bohemian in him and disorder is one of the attributes of Bohemianism. Not a little of this supposed disorder, however, is deliberately planned and in most cases the chair that seems to have been pushed hastily into a corner, the table with its load of sketches, the brilliant Oriental tapestry flung across a sofa, the Hawaiian club and Maori spear dangling from nails on the wall, have been carefully considered from all parts of the room and lesser objects have been grouped with reference to them, while the light is made to heighten the effect of some, and to throw others into rich shadow. A painter needs these effects sometimes, but a little of the informality of studios might be advantageously introduced in our domestic interiors.

Snugness and fixity in furnishing and arrangement are to be avoided. The trick of pairing everything for symmetry's sake, chairs, vases, bric-a-brac, pictures, and so on, produces a depressing stiffness and formality in an apartment. Chairs should look as though somebody had just occupied them or would do so directly. Books and pictures should show that they are made to be looked at. Rugs, skins, curtains, screens and portières should indicate that they are made to use.

We have not as yet mastered a knowledge of the use and beauty of draperies, and are inclined to make their arrangement too formal and to loop them in long, unpleasant curves instead of making them to hang easily and naturally. An artist will suspend a drapery so that its folds will be arranged by gravity instead of by pins, chains, and ribbons, and I have been in the studios of a few poor-devil artists where a picturesque partition of old tapestries, fragments of costume, bits of Persian and Turkish textiles, and sketches and studies concealed a bed and washstand. You simply regarded that corner as a picturesque aggregation of studio oddities, whereas, if some person other than an artist had had the arrangement of the draperies, you would have surmised at once that they merely served to conceal the poverty of the inhabitant or the strictly utilitarian character of that portion of the apartment. Sometimes the poor fellows don't have even a spare bit of drapery to hang up, and I was in one studio whose occupant slept on the floor on a pile of old clothing. It is a mistake to suppose that all artists are wealthy.

This magazine has presented from time to time comments and illustrations upon studios, from which those who do not frequent those places may form an adequate idea of what they



FRONT ROOM, WITH INDIAN CARVED WALL, CEILING AND MANTEL.

are like; but there are all kinds of studios and in every one occupied by a good artist may be found something to suggest ideas regarding the decorating and furnishing of other apartments.

I happen to have in mind at this moment the studio of Constant Mayer, an apartment not large and not showy, but one that bears the impress of refined taste. You are struck on entering it by the sense of restfulness and quiet. There are no strong lights or strong tints, but a hush of many draperies is in the place, all sounds are softened, and all colors brought into key with a low tone of color. A large part of the wall space is covered with tapestries and hangings, old and silvery gray, and the rectangular character of the room is concealed by a sort of canopy, like that erected over thrones, that depends from the ceiling and lets fall its long draperies to the floor. This canopy is placed opposite the principal window that lights the apartment, and is useful to pose models under, as by moving the hangings slightly bold masses of shade can be thrown to one side or other of the figure. A faint repetition of this idea occurs in a corner of the room where another piece of drapery depends from the ceiling and is caught back against the wall. In fact, hangings are employed with unusual profusion and grace in this studio, they fall about the doorways, they serve as pictures on the walls, they act as frames for trophies of arms and armor, and they give the interior something of that sedate charm that we may conceive to have pertained to the arras-bordered hall of some medieval castle.

#### TABLE SUGGESTIONS.

**O**UR dinner tables should always be decorated when it is feasible to do so. The table is the family gathering place. It is there that one should forget about his cares and his business, that he should maintain acquaintance with his wife and children and be sensible and genial. A little color and brightness and whatever contributes to please the eye as well as add to creature comforts, makes the cheer of eating and drinking the greater.

Scraps of Chinese and Japanese ware, bits of majolica, a trifle of cut glass, an engraved celery

glass, a dainty tea cup or two, add to the charm of a good meal. Above all, flowers and candles are pleasant at the table, candles in soft, rosy, paper shades, one to each plate, and flowers either in glasses, epergnes, or in pots screened in bowls and vases of painted china and hammered brass. The placing of *boutonnieres* at individual plates where their fragrance may steal up to one's nose between the appetizing fumes of roast and boiled is a good idea, but it is also well to have a bouquet in the center of the table as a *coup* of color to the pictorial composition.

I am not sure that it would not be well to have a hanging basket suspended from the center chandelier or gasolier above the table, and I have also seen a pretty device for a center piece wherein a plebeian tin pan, inverted, was banked up with moss and covered with bunches of blossoms. The latest device is sea shells—the big, pink-lipped variety that you may find ornamenting the mantels of country houses in company with antiquated candlesticks and samplers—which are filled with flowers and vines and placed in a group in the center of the table. The effect is said to be very pretty. Two or three of the shells form the apex of a little pyramid and are half hidden amid delicate sprays of ferns. Two or three larger shells just below them contain mosses, partridge berries, and fern, and the larger ones that form the base of the hillock are arranged mouth outward, and filled with roses and other available flowers.

As to candle shades to be used at table, though the little red paper shades are best, if one wishes for variety he can find it in the French shades that are now imported and that are made up in the likeness of flowers, or in the figured shades of Chinese crape. And as to epergnes, they have made their appearance in colored glass four feet high and resting on French plate mirrors with scalloped edges. They represent flowers, trumpet-flowers for instance in their natural colors, and rising from a heavy green glass calyx and spray of green glass leaves. We will rival Venice in our glass work shortly.

ARISTOCRACY now warms itself at cedar wood fires, burning up for luxury's sake what will some day be as precious as gold to art.

